

VIII. *Part of a Letter from Mr. T. M. in Salop, to Mr. William Baxter, concerning the strange effects from the eating Dog-mercury with Remarks thereon by Hans Sloan M. D. and S. R. S.*

— **W**. *Matthews*, his Wife and Three Children, have been lately very ill, and like to dye; the occasion and manner of their Sickneſs was very odd, and therefore I ſhall give you a particular account of both. About Three Weeks ago, the Woman went into the Fields and gathered ſome Herbs, and (having firſt Boyled them) Fryed them with Bacon for her own and her Families Supper: After they had been about Two Howrs in Bed, one of the Children (which is Dumb and about Seven Years Old) fell very Sick, and ſo did the other Two preſently after; which obliged the Man and his Wife to Riſe and take the Children to the Fire, where they Vomited and Purged, and within half an Hour fell faſt aſleep. They took the Children to bed as they were aſleep, and they themſelves went to bed too, and fell faſter aſleep too than ever they had done before. The Man waked the next Morning about Three Hours after his uſual Time, went to his Labour at Mr *Newports*, and ſo by the ſtrength of his conſtitution carried it off; but he ſays, he thought his Chin had bin all the Day in a Fire, and was forced to keep his Hat full of Water by him all the Day long, and frequently dipt his Chin in it as he was at his Work. The Woman wakened a while after her Husband, and being forced to get up to look after her little Family concerns; but ſhe was very Sick and has continued ſo till within theſe few Days, ſince which ſhe is very well recovered. One of their Children ſlept from that Night (which was Thurſday Three Weeks)

till Monday Evening following ; and then (having just only opened her Eyes and made Two Sprunts, without speaking one word) dyed immediately while she was asleep ; endeavours were used to awaken her, but in vain. The other Two Children slept about Twenty Four Hours, and upon their wakening fell a Vomiting and Purging again, which I think saved their Lives. By Mr. *Newports* and my Direction, they sent some of the same Herb to the Doctors and Apothecaries in *Salop*, who generally say 'tis *Dog-mercury*, but some say 'tis a sort of Nightshade : whatever it be, 'tis certainly Poisonous, and 'tis observed that the Cattle never browse it. *Matthews* told me he never eat so pleasant an Herb in his Life ; and his Wife says that her old Master, viz. Mr. *Moxon* did frequently eat of it ; but I guess it to be a mistake. I know your profound Judgment and Learning in these matters, and have therefore given you t his large Account. I am no herbarist, but this I observed of the Herb ; 'tis branched and seeded something like *Spinage* or *Mercury*, but leaved rather like *Lakeweed*. The leaves are dented too.

Yours,

T. M.

S I R,

TH E enclosed Letter was sent last *April*, to Mr. *William Baxter*, who soon after did me the Favour to shew it me ; I found the operations of the Plant therein mentioned to be extraordinary, and the Circumstances related very particularly, and that the account was
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the more Surprizing if it should be *Dog-mercury* ; which by all Writers I have perused, is reckoned innocent and to have the same Vertue with the ordinary Mercury used every day by Physicians. On these Considerations I begg'd the Favour of Mr. *Baxter*, that he would please to write to the Gentleman who sent the Account, for a Dried Sample or Specimen of the Herb ; which he did, and it proves to be the same they thought it was, the Stalks, Leaves and Spikes agreeing exactly in every thing with those of *Dog-Mercury*. It is describ'd and figur'd in several Authors. Mr. *Ray* in his History of Plants calls it *Mercurialis Perennis repens Cynocrambe dicta*, p.163. Gerard calls it *Cynocrambe*, p. 333. Parkinson, *Mercurialis Sylvestris Cynocrambe dicta vulgaris*, p. 295. *Theatr. Botan.* Johan. *Bauhine* in his Second Tome, *Lib. 23. Cynocrambe mas & fœmina sive Mercurialis repens*, p.979. And Caspar *Bauhine* in his *Pinax*, p.122. *Mercurialis Montana testiculata & spicata* : In which Books the other Names given it by other *Herbalists* may be found, whither I refer you for a further Account of it. Whether the Quantity or Quality of this were the Cause of the Effects I know not, but think that every Body will do well to be cautious and wary in the use of it in such Quantities, after such a Warning.

Tours, &c.